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ABSTRACT

For many years, the resilience phenomenon in populations at-risk has been a major focus in trying to understand and explain why some people who experience challenging and stressful experiences are able to overcome these negative adversities and adapt competently. Resilience has been found to consist of different protective factors that are essential for an adolescent to respond to stress and adversity in competent ways. By taking a qualitative approach, this study focuses on educational resilience and the protective factors that resilient adolescents implicitly know are necessary to stay academically successful during the transition to high school. Participants were adolescents from urban, low-income, minority groups. Findings show nine different protective factors identified by resilient students as being important factors for ones' academic success: (1) individual aspirations; (2) personal factors; (3) academic behaviors; (4) family support; (5) academic environmental factors; (6) other support factors; (7) positive social behaviors; (8) negative social behaviors; and (9) spirituality. (Contains 22 references.) (Author/JDM)

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Educationally Resilient Adolescents' Implicit Knowledge of the Resilience Phenomenon

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Abstract

For many years, the resilience phenomenon in populations at-risk has been a major focus in trying to understand and explain why some people who experience challenging and stressful experiences are able to overcome these negative adversities and adapt competently. Resilience has been found to consist of different protective factors that are essential for an adolescent to respond to stress and adversity in competent ways. By taking a qualitative approach, this study focuses on educational resilience and the protective factors that resilient adolescents implicitly know are necessary to stay academically successful during the transition to high school. Participants were adolescents from urban, low-income, minority groups. Findings show nine different protective factors identified by resilient students as being important factors for ones' academic success: 1) Individual Aspirations; 2) Personal Factors; 3) Academic Behaviors; 4) Family Support; 5) Academic Environmental Factors; 6) Other Support Factors; 7) Positive Social Behaviors; 8) Negative Social Behaviors; and 9) Spirituality.

Resilient Adolescents' Implicit Knowledge of the Resilience Phenomenon

Introduction

Background on Resilience

Researchers, parents, educators and society at large have been concerned with the educational underachievement of minority students and students at-risk (Reyes & Jason, 1993). In the current era of school reform, the need for finding ways to effectively respond to children and adolescents who are at risk for academic failure is a priority for researchers and school practitioners (Wang & Haertel, 1995). For many years, the research on at-risk populations was based on the assumption that certain background characteristics put one in a greater risk for "failing in school and as adults"(Gregory, 1995, p 136). However, Masten, Douglas, Neemann, Gest, Tellegen, and Garmezy (1995), as well as Luthar and Zigler (1991) have noted that research is shifting from focusing on symptoms and vulnerabilities to the creation of models that emphasize the successful adaptation of groups at risk despite their exposure to psychological risk factors. Doing this kind of research is necessary in order to have a better understanding of the kind of reforms and intervention programs that promote adaptive behaviors.

The study of resilience has found that there are risk factors, stressors, and adversities that challenge people's lives. Wang and Haertel (1995) differentiate between these constructs. According to Wang and Haertel (1995), risk factors are characteristics of a group (living in an impoverished, ethnic minority neighborhood can have detrimental developmental outcomes for children); stressors and adversities, on the other hand, are "discrete events" (p. 161) that can influence one's performance negatively. Risk factors, stressors, and adversities affect some people more than others. As Rutter (1995) explains, stress and adversity are not experienced with the same strength or in the same amount by a population. Understanding the major stressors and risk factors can help one to recognize a child who is at-risk, therefore, providing more support, care, and guidance. Among the many stressors, adversities, and psychological risk factors that a child, adolescent or someone in general can face are:

poverty, perinatal stress, having a minority status, coming from a single parent household, and ... parental psychopathology (Gordon Rouse, in press; Luthar, & Zigler, 1991; Rutter, 1995; Werner, 1993; and Werner & Smith, 1982; 1992).

Understanding and finding ways to help at-risk populations has led to an extensive area of research called resilience. During the last two decades, the resilience phenomenon in populations at-risk has been a major focus in trying to understand and explain why some people who experience challenging and stressful experiences are able to overcome these negative adversities and adapt competently (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Researchers have tried to understand the at-risk populations by analyzing the different contexts in which these people live (Werner, 1993, Werner & Smith, 1982, 1992). Understanding the Resilience Phenomenon has been very difficult because every individual reacts to stress and adversity in complex and different ways (Rutter, 1995). While some individuals aren't able to face adversities successfully, others are not only capable of facing adversities in a competent manner, but these experiences give them strength to face future ones (Rutter, 1995).

As a multifaceted phenomenon (Gordon, in press), resilience has been found to consist of different protective factors that are essential for a child, adolescent or adult to be capable of responding to stress and adversity in a competent manner. Research on at-risk populations has led experts in the field come up with different protective factors as well as protective mechanisms that assist people in dealing competently during adversity. Protective factors are static entities, while protective mechanisms are active processes. Even though researchers have come up with different findings, these factors and mechanisms interrelate to form a whole that allows children, adolescents and people in general to overcome distress and adversity in competent ways. In his review of research on resilience, Garmezy (1991) found three major, broad, protective factors: 1) personal characteristics, (i.e., self-esteem, internal locus of control); 2) family related factors, (i.e., support from at least one family

member); and 3) external support systems outside the family (ex., a natural responsiveness from a teacher, or preacher).

As mentioned earlier, research on resilience has lead to the discovery of both protective factors and protective mechanisms. Even though researchers are learning more about protective factors, little is known about protective mechanisms (Rutter, 1995). In an effort to understand more about protective mechanisms, Rutter (1995) concluded that protective mechanisms most likely fall into five main groups. According to Rutter, there are protective mechanisms that reduce the personal impact of risk experiences by altering the exposure to, or involvement in, the risk (ex., parental supervision). Second, there are protective mechanisms that reduce negative chain reactions which are applied at the time of the difficulty or at a later time (ex., good humor when there is hostility among family members). Third, there are protective mechanisms that promote self-esteem and self-efficacy (ex., by experiencing successful relationships, successful taking of responsibilities and experiencing successful coping with manageable stress). Fourth, there are protective mechanisms that open up positive opportunities (ex., academic opportunities that help children at-risk to get out of a disadvantaged environment, and geographical move). Finally, there are protective mechanisms related to the positive cognitive processing of negative experiences (ex., accept the reality of negative experiences instead of distorting or denying its existence).

Educational Resilience

Resilience is a broad area of study that unfolds in many different aspects of people's lives. Gordon (in press) defines resilience as a multifaceted phenomenon. Being such, it can be concluded that there are different "types" of resilience (Gordon, in press). One can overcome poverty, ethnic minority status, a medical problem, or a variety of adversities throughout one's life. There are people who overcome a variety of adversities and succeed academically, a type of resilience called *educational resilience.* Wang, Haertel, and Walberg define *educational resilience* as "the heightened likelihood of

success in school and in other life accomplishments, despite environmental adversities, brought about by early traits, conditions, and experiences" (1994, p. 46)

Studies on at-risk populations have led researchers to discover that there are personal factors, familial factors, environmental factors, and cultural factors that impact students' academic achievement either positively or negatively (Finn & Rock, 1997; Garmezy, 1991; and Werner & Smith, 1982, 1992) For many years, empirical research on the Resilience Phenomenon has tried to understand what are the factors and protective mechanisms that lead to children and adolescents' competence. These studies utilize scales to measure the different aspects, psychological and social, in children's lives and their relationship to academic failure and competence (Anderson & Keith, 1997; Cause, Felner & Primavera, 1982; Finn & Rock, 1997; Gordon, 1996, Gordon Rouse, in press; Luthar, 1991; Masten, Coatsworth, Neewmann, Gest, Tellegen & Garmezy, 1995; and Reyes & Jason, 1993). However, it hasn't been until recently that research studies have focused on adolescents' own experiences, allowing resilient adolescents to tell their own story, to better understand the different factors that lead to academic success as opposed to underachievement (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Floyd, 1996; Gregory, 1995; Hubbard, 1999; Newman, Lohman, Newman, Myers & Smith, 2000; Newman, Myers, Newman, Lohman & Smith, 2000; O'Connor, 1997; and Smokowsky, Reynolds, & Berzruczko, 1999). It is important to understand from resilient adolescents' own perspectives what they think is important in order to reach their academic goals (Newman, Lohman, et al., 2000).

Empirical findings are necessary and crucial in trying to understand different phenomena. At the same time, there is a greater need in trying to understand what people do based on their own experience by using a "nonmathematical process of interpretation" (Strauss & Corbin, 2000, p. 11) Trying to interpret and understand a phenomenon by listening to people's own experiences and drawing conclusions from them is one of the purposes of qualitative studies. Doing qualitative studies can help researchers, educators, as well as parents to better understand the protective factors that need

to be fostered in children and adolescents at risk. With the exception of more recent studies on academic resilience, for many years, research has based its findings on standardized measurements, rather than by trying to understand people's own experiences.

Resilience has been found to be a phenomenon present in different domains of one's life. Understanding the Resilience Phenomenon in relation to academic competence can be better achieved by trying to get a better understanding about children and adolescents' lives. There is a relative increment in high school dropout rates in minority populations and previous research studies have found that there is a decrease in academic achievement as measured by students' G.P.A. during the transition to middle school and again at the transition to high school (Chung, Elias, & Schneider, 1998; Gillock, & Reyes, 1996; Gutman, & Midley, 2000). The statistics on high school dropouts as well as the findings of the negative impact that the transition to high school has on students' academic performance makes it critical for scholars to understand the different mechanisms and resources that these adolescents use in order to adapt competently to their environment (Smokowsky, Reynold, & Bezruczo, 1999). Competent resilient children and adolescents from at-risk groups not only know about the struggles, but they also have an understanding of what it takes to be academically successful.

Academic Competence and Resilient Adolescents' Advice

Few studies on academic competence in at-risk populations have previously examined what adolescents think, based on their own experiences, is needed to stay academically competent in the midst of adversity. One previous study reported the advice given by graduating college seniors to entering college freshmen (Swing, & Cangemi, 1996) however, this study only reported students' advice without analyzing their responses. By taking a qualitative approach, the present study tries to better understand the educational resilience phenomenon in resilient adolescents who are at-risk for school failure, but who, despite the many obstacles, have been able to adapt and find ways to maintain a good academic record that provides them with the optimism, support, and willingness to continue

their education. They are the experts and as experts they feel competent in giving younger students advice on how to stay academically successful. The present study focuses on educational resilience and the protective factors that resilient adolescents implicitly know are necessary to stay academically successful during the transition to high school. By asking these resilient adolescents what one should do to stay academically successful, this study shifts from examining background and contextual factors that predict resilience and focuses on what adolescents think needs to be done to achieve in school based on their experience. It was hypothesized that adolescents who are resilient due to the many obstacles they face in their everyday lives and the fact that they yet maintain their academic achievement, have an implicit knowledge of what it takes to be academically competent.

Method

Young Scholar Program

The Young Scholars Program(YSP) is an intervention program run by a major university in central Ohio. This program was created to promote academic advancement for adolescents from urban, low-income, minority groups. These adolescents were identified with academic promise during sixth grade. The purpose of this program is to increase the number of minority students attending college.

During the spring of sixth grade, these students are nominated based on their academic promise, leadership, and other talents and abilities by teachers, counselors, community leaders or parents. The university has set specific guidelines for students who want to be part of the YSP. For a student to be part of the program, he or she needs to be part of a minority group in Ohio that has been underrepresented in higher education (Newman, Myers, et al., 2000; Newman, Lohman, et al., 2000). During the summer of 1995, when this data was collected, the ethnic/minority groups considered for the YSP were African American, Hispanic, Native American/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, Appalachian (defined in Ohio by county) and others. In addition, these young

students must come from a low-income household with some form of governmental assistance (i.e., reduced lunch or FDC) in which neither parent has received a college degree (personal communication, 2000).

As part of the program, both the students and their parents need to sign a contract that states that they will apply to this university. They are offered loan-free financial assistance as long as they keep their academics in good standing, a 3.0 grade point average or greater during high school. Students who maintain a 3.0 grade point average or higher are required to attend the Summer Institute which is housed at this university. Those students whose G.P.A. is lower than 3.0 are required to attend a Summer Academy in their home city, instead of attending the Summer Institute (Newman, Myers, et al., 2000; Newman, Lohman, et al., 2000).

Participants

In the summer of 1995, there were 140 junior standing students and 116 senior standing students who attended the three week Summer Institute at the university. Students' ethnic backgrounds were as followed: there were 103 African American 12th-graders (29 males and 74 females) and 120 African American 11th-graders (44 males and 76 females); 4 12th-graders (3 males and 1 female) and 12 11th-graders (5 males and 7 females) from Hispanic descent; 3 Appalachian 12th-graders (2 males and 1 female) and 6 Appalachian 11th-graders (4 males and 2 females); 1 12th-grader male and 2 11th-grader males from Asian/Pacific Islander descent; 2 12-grader females from Native American/Alaskan American descent; and 3 12th-graders from "other" underrepresented groups (1 male and 2 females). It is important to note that Appalachian students in this sample may not be from an ethnic minority group, and they may be from rural areas. Yet, researchers have incorporated Appalachains in the study of ethnic group membership and ethnic identity in cultural groups in the U.S. (Keefe, 1992).

The sample size for the present study included a sub-sample of 156 students who in the Fall of 1995 were entering 11th and 12th grade (n = 103 and n = 53, respectively). Students volunteered to

participate and were anonymous. Students who were part of this study attended the Summer Institute at the university during the summer of 1995.

Measures

Participants in this study were part of the Young Scholar Program. Students in the present analysis are resilient adolescents. These adolescents are considered at risk due to the stressor variables experienced in their lives and environment. These adolescents experienced personal and social hardships by having a low SES status, belonging to a minority or at-risk group, and/or having parents who didn't go to college. In the present study, resilient students were defined as having experienced one or more stressors in their lives, but being able to stay academically competent by maintaining a 3.0 or higher GPA. Other studies have also included the students' SES, minority affiliation, parents' educational level as stress factors and have defined competence based on students' grade point average. (Cauce, Felner & Primavera, 1982; Gordon Rouse, in press; Newman, Myers, et al., 2000; Newman, Lohman, et al., 2000; Smokowski, Reynolds & Bezruczko, 1999). It is important to note, however, that Luthar (1991) did not find demographic information to be a stressor since the statistical analysis did not show demographics to have any significant and independent impact on reducing competence scores. According to Luthar (1991), not obtaining the same results as previous studies may be due to the homogeneity of the group since over three-quarters of the participants were from an ethnic minority group and most came from lower SES.

Research Design

The present study takes a qualitative approach to analyze resilient adolescents' responses, entering 11th and 12th grade in the Fall of the same year, to one question: What advice would you give to a Young Scholar who is going from 8th grade to 9th grade about how to stay academically successful?

The present study used a methodological approached known as content analysis described by Patton (1990).

The purpose of using content analysis in the present study was to allow emerging themes to be discovered without having any existing theory in mind. Strauss and Corbin (2000) explain that theory derived from the data "is more likely to resemble the 'reality'" (p. 12) than those theories that are derived from previously experienced or preconceived speculations. Responses to the question being analyzed were read carefully for emerging themes. The first step for the discovery of emerging themes was to look for concepts, events and actions that were recurring in the data, also known as inductive analysis (Patton, 1990). Themes and/or categories were identified by two researchers independently and a final list of themes was created where concepts were put into the same category after systematically comparing the similarities and differences and making sure that they belonged to the same category or theme. Taking this approach lead to the emergence of themes that are part of the Resilience Phenomenon. This approach supports the Resilience Phenomenon findings and strengthens its significance because Resilience Theory emerged from the data, rather than imposing a preconceived theory on the data.

The open-ended adolescents' responses led researchers to discover 9 different resilient factors that adolescents believed were needed to be utilized in order to be academically successful. These categories were as follows: 1) Individual Aspirations: personal things they do to motivate themselves or have goals or reach higher; 2) Personal factors: Individual characteristics or personality traits that help one to be resilient; 3) Academic Behaviors: Actual behaviors, things you do that help you do well academically including, but not limited to, extracurricular activities; 4) Family Support: support that you receive from family members whether for academics, your emotions or any support in general; 5) Academic Environmental factors: the atmosphere or ethos surrounding the school; 6) Other Support Factors: people besides family members, like teachers, preachers, and community programs (the

Young Scholar Program) that give you support for your academics, emotions, behaviors and other areas; 7) Positive Social behaviors: behaviors in the social domain that help you achieve academically; 8) Negative Social Behaviors: behaviors that should not be done in the school realm or social domain in order to reach academic achievement; 9) Spirituality: a belief in a higher force, "God", that sort of guides you, leads you, helps you. The open-ended responses were analyzed using the smallest unit or phrase that had meaning. All of the response units were examined before concluding there were nine categories.

Data analysis

Once these concepts were identified, researchers analyzed students' responses to identify and place responses into one or more categories or themes which include: 1) Individual aspirations; 2) Personal Factors; 3) Academic Behaviors; 4) Family Support; 5) Academic Environmental Factors; 6) Other Support Factors; 7) Positive Social Behaviors; 8) Negative Social Behaviors; and 9) Spirituality. The use of triangulation (Patton, 1990) in the present study was achieved by having two different researchers analyze the data. Data was analyzed by two different people in order to bring more than one perspective into the analysis process. Coding was done independently, and after coding was finalized researchers discussed their results in order to compare for accuracy and differences. When a response was put into different categories by the two researchers, researchers discussed the answer until both reached agreement. The content analysis and triangulation used in the present study was described by Patton (1990).

Results

The present findings are divided into three broad protective factors that Garmezy (1991), found in his review of resilience literature to be critical for one's ability to adapt competently in the midst of adversity. These protective factors are: 1) personal characteristics; 2) family related factors; and 3) external support systems outside the family. In the present study, these broad protective factors

are composed of nine different, yet more specific categories that resilient adolescents found to be necessary to maintain one's academic achievement during the transition to high school. These nine different categories were discovered by doing qualitative analysis utilizing content analysis. The nine categories will be analyzed individually and examples from adolescents' responses will be given to better conceptualize the findings.

Personal Characteristics

Research on the Resilience Phenomenon has found that there are several personal characteristics that act as protective factors for children and adolescents at-risk. Among the dispositional attributes, genetic and inherent ones (Luthar & Zigler, 1991) found in resilient children and adolescents are temperament, the ability to get along, and cognitive skills (Arellano, & Padilla, 1996; Floyd, 1996; Garmerzy, 1991, Gordon, 1996; Newman, Lohman, et al., 2000; Newman, Myers, et al., 2000; O'Connor, 1997; Rutter, 1987; Smokowski, Reynolds, & Bezruczko, 1999; Werner, 1993; Werner & Smith, 1982, 1992). It is important to mention that in an investigation by Luthar (1991) intelligence was found to operate as a vulnerability factor instead of acting as a protective one.

In the present study of educationally resilient adolescents, they mentioned a number of personal factors that aided them in being educationally successful. "Stay focused" and "Be yourself" was some advice that the participants gave. They also said, "If you get distracted or lose focus, don't panic."

Individual Aspirations.

The most predominant category found among these resilient adolescents was individual aspirations. Individual aspirations are defined in this study as personal things resilient adolescents do to motivate themselves, have goals, and reach higher. Feelings of self-efficacy, self-confidence, and internal locus of control are important for resilient adolescents who, when facing adversities, are able to utilize these personal characteristics allowing them to feel able to accomplish and achieve despite the

many obstacles they encounter in their every day life (Gordon, 1995, 1996 and Gordon Rouse in press).

In their qualitative study on resilient adolescents, using a sub-sample of the Chicago longitudinal Study, Smokowsky, Reynolds and Bezruczko (1999) found that perseverance, determination, believing in a better future, and the ability to maintain one's dreams and goals were recurring themes among the resilient adolescents. They also found that resilient adolescents' ability to see that overcoming obstacles wasn't easy and understanding that there were ways to achieve one's goals allowed them to see a future with a 'happy ending' and help them to continue going.

In the present study, individual aspirations were found to be an important protective factor to continue studying. Having aspirations allowed these adolescents to have a reason to continue studying, to continue striving for academic excellence. Resilient adolescents were aware that in order to be successful in school, there are a lot of individual factors, qualities one must have:

> If you want to be successful, you must have many specific qualities. You must be self-determined, self-reliant, persistent, determined and above all YOU MUST HAVE AN EDUCATION... That is why G.P.A. is important. It shows who is not only smarter, but who is dedicated and self-determined.

One of the most important ways in which resilient adolescents express their individual aspirations is by having motivation. According to Gordon (1996), motivation is an important aspect in one's life. Ford (1992) defines motivation as having goals, emotions and personal agency beliefs, which are similar to self-esteem and self concept. Gordon Rouse (in press) states that for someone to be motivated, it is important to have a goal, to believe one has the capacity to achieve the specific goal and to believe that the environment in which one lives facilitates that goal. Anderson & Keith (1997) found that motivational components were important in at-risk students' academic success. In this study, resilient adolescents show motivational patterns while giving advice to the younger resilient

adolescents. It was also seen from some of these resilient students, that having an environment that was responsive to their needs motivated them more to continue working hard: "I would tell them to keep striving hard. This is a good program and they should want to stay a part of it because of the opportunities. They shouldn't let this chance pass by."

Some resilient adolescents were aware of the importance of being part of YSP and felt motivated by it: "Always keep your eyes on the prize and that is to graduate. Never let anyone get in you way of getting your grades. Remember, you are a scholar and people expect you to act as a scholar."

O'Connor, (1997) described the case studies of six African American adolescents who were resilient. These adolescents were aware of the many struggles and barriers 'their people' have to face in the United States; however, they felt positive about their future. Arellano and Padilla (1996) found in their sample of resilient Latino college students that optimism and persistence were important protective factors for these young people's academic success. In the present study, adolescents also were aware of the many barriers they had to face in this society, such as low expectations from other people. Nonetheless, these resilient adolescents were not only motivated to continue their studies, they also utilized the negative expectations other people had about them as a way to motivate themselves academically even harder. They recommended younger scholars to keep going, and to have perseverance.

> I know as minorities, we have a lot of people trying to put us down. But don't let them get to ya! [sic] Just think, every time you get an "A" on that test and report card, you're one step ahead into your goals.
>
> "Don't get discouraged, even when times may look their worse!"

The present study supports Floys(1996) and Newman, Lohman, et al., (2000) who found that some students were aware of their teachers' low expectations, yet they used both persistence and

optimism when faced with this reality. In the present study some resilient students mentioned .. .. teachers as a barrier to their academic achievement, however, they warned younger adolescents not to feel discouraged by it and to search deep inside for the motivation and strength needed to continue their academic journey:

> There will be many conflicts and problems in your way, or maybe even a teacher could be, maybe [sic] trying to stop you from be[ing] successful. But that is the time where [sic] you must dig deep down inside yourself for some strength to carry you through the hard times you may encounter. You must know in your heart and mind that this is something that you want. Don't let no one [sic] stand in your way.

All throughout their responses, resilient adolescents encouraged younger resilient adolescents to continue their schooling, to utilize the personal characteristics they posses to accomplish academically, to be aware of the negative expectations, to continue fighting, to not get discouraged, and, above all, to believe in their capabilities.

Personal Factors.

In addition to individual aspirations, there are other personal factors that have been found to be critical in resilient adolescents ability to cope competently with adversity. In the present study, resilient adolescents were found to utilize individual characteristics or personality traits that helped them to be academically resilient.

In the longitudinal study on a cohort of children in the Hawaiian Island of Kauai, Werner and her collegues (1993) found that during the elementary years, resilient children had better reasoning skills and by the end of high school, the resilient girls had a sense of responsibility. Previous research on academic achievement and competence have also found that there are several personal factors that are critical for children and adolescents to succeed in school. In their study on the transition to high school, Newman, Lohman, et al., (2000) found that adolescents who were high achievers in school,

had "a more achievement oriented outlook" (p. 410) and used individual strategies such as dedication, determination, hard work, self-discipline, and time management. Newman, Myers, et al. (2000), also found that high achieving African Americans considered hard work as well as being focused to be necessary to do well in school. O'Connor (1997) also found in the six case studies of resilient African American high school students that adolescents' affirmed that hard work and individual effort were essential in order to become someone in this society.

In the present study, resilient adolescents advise their younger counterparts to have a commitment: "My advice is for students not to get over-confident and forget what was [sic] really important like I did." Adolescents also felt that staying focused was very important: "First, entering high school they must make sure they focus, because a good start is very important", "stay focused and do your best", "Stay focused in what you do and to never follow the bandwagon". Other researchers (O'Connor, 1997) have also found that resilient adolescents believe that one needs to work hard in order to achieve. In the present study, resilient adolescents also mentioned hard work as necessary to continue their academic success in school: "everything you get, you need to work hard for -- it's about perfection, quality and quantity. Slack, laziness and excuses are no longer a part of your vocabulary... ".

There were also other personal factors that resilient adolescents mentioned. Researchers have linked resilience with good problem solving strategies (Werner, 1993, Werner & Smith, 1982, 1992). In their review of literature on successful children, Masten, Best and Garmezy's (1990) and Masten & Coatsworth, (1998) found that many studies have found a correlation between know-how, intellectual and cognitive abilities and resilience. The resilient adolescents in this study, also showed good reasoning skills as they gave advice to their younger peers on how to stay academically successful. They emphasized the importance of knowing how to prioritize and put their school work first: "if you are an athelete [sic] like myself, you must learn to properly balance your time. You must

recognize your priorities which above all are your grades", " Firstly, be prioritized. Time management is very important in high school.".

Smokowsky, Reynolds and Bezruczko (1999), O'Connor (1997), Floyd (1996), Arellano and Padilla (1996), and Rutter (1995), are among the many researchers that have found that children and adolescents who do well in the midst of adversity have one trait in common which is a positive attitude toward life. In the same manner, the resilient adolescents in this study advise their younger resilient counterparts to be positive: "look past all of the negativity and stay positive", "And even when it seems that there are more problems than you can handle, try and work through them anyway". Some of the resilient adolescents believed that one needs to be oneself in order to be able to achieve academically instead of pretending to be someone else in order to be liked by others: "I feel you should always just relax and act like yourself always". Resilient adolescents also believe that one is responsible for one's actions in one's life: "Remember, that you are the only one that can run your life".

It is important to note that even though these resilient adolescents were giving advice on how to stay academically successful during the transition to high school, their own experiences made them emphasize the many personal factors that were mentioned above.

Academic Behaviors.

In the present study, academic behaviors are operationally defined as actual behaviors, things one does that assist in doing well academically, including, but not limited to extracurricular activities. Research on at-risk resilient adolescents has found that certain academic school related behaviors are important in order to do well in school such as studying hard, doing homework, and attending classes (Anderson & Keith, 1997; Finn, & Rock, 1997; Newman, Lohman, et al., 2000; Newman, Myers, et al., 2000). Masten and Coatsworth (1998) and Gordon (1995) state that the importance of extracurricular activities on competence hasn't been considered an important area of study and that

being involved in extracurricular activities can enhance one's talents, contributing to one's sense of self-competence, efficacy, self-esteem and well-being. In addition, Gordon (1995) states that extracurricular activities also help in the transition to postsecondary education.

Resilient adolescents in the present study also emphasized certain academic behaviors as critical in one's ability to do well in school. Studying hard was one of the most important academic behaviors seen throughout the essay question: "Keep your mind focused on your books"; "It's very important to maintain a focus on your academics because your education should be your main priority"; "Keep to your books and school activities because they would get you far in life... and try to stay completely involved in school"; "Keep your grades up and study really hard"; "Strive for academic excellence".

Resilient adolescents also mentioned that it is important to do homework and attend their classes in order to stay academically successful: "I would tell them to do their work, and go to class, and not miss school"; "The advice I would give to the scholars is to stay in school. Go to class everyday, and stay awake" ; "Also, don't go absentee crazy, and stop going to school. Go everyday and stick with it and graduate to your fullest." Adolescents also felt that there were certain things one should do academically such as challenge oneself and to have good study skills: "Stay academically challenged and do the best you can to get a good start in high school"; "I would tell them the importance of study skills and determination, not to settle for b's."

As mentioned earlier, in the present study, extracurricular activities are part of the academic behaviors one needs to use in order to do well in school. According to Masten and Coastworth (1997) and Gordon (1995), the impact that extracurricular activities have on one's academic competence hasn't been investigated much in the research on academic resilience. In the present study, adolescents gave younger adolescents the advice of being involved in school activities as they saw this to be important in one's academic success: " I would tell them to stay focused on grades and activities because sometimes activities help grades... "; "Also, one should get involved in activities" ; " Stay

focused on your first three years of high school. Go for the honors diploma and also valedictorian. Be involved in sports and extracurricular clubs." "Get involved in school activities like sports, student council, and WHS."

Family Related Factors

Family Support.

For many decades, researchers have agreed that family related factors are important for one's ability to adapt competently when facing adversities (Garmezy, 1991; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Werner, 1993; Werner & Smith, 1982, 1992). Research on academic transitions, as well as research on academic competence on resilient and non-resilient adolescents have found that parental support, parental monitoring, parental encouragement, positive role models among the family members, parent characteristics such as being warm, and parental involvement (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Hubbard, 1999; Newman, Lohman, et al., 2000; Newman, Myers, et al., 2000; O'Connor, 1997; Smokowski, Reynolds, & Bezruczko, 1999; Werner, 1993; Werner & Smith, 1982; 1992) are important in the lives of resilient children and adolescents.

In the present study, family support includes the support that one receives from family members whether for academics, one's emotions or any support in general. There were only two resilient adolescents who mentioned family factors as important for one's academic success, but what they mention lends credit to the importance of family support. "Keep your head up, be sure to [be] thankful to your parent [sic] [it] doesn't matter what they want you to do, learn about your culture, tradition, custom and family value"; "Don't loose track of the important stuff, like school and family members."

External Support Systems Outside the Family

Children, adolescents and people in general are part of different systems. It is the interaction between the "individual's genetic make-up, temperament, developmental status" (Wang & Haertel,

1995, p. 163) and their environment that influences individuals' behaviors and individuals' outcomes. Research on resilience has found that external support systems outside the family are important for an individual's ability to adapt competently in the different environments they live in (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Cauce, Felner, & Primavera; 1982; Floyd, 1997; Gregory, 1995; Gutman & Midgley, 1999; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Newman, Lohman, et al., 2000; Newman & Myers, et al., 2000; O'Connor, 1997; Rutter, 1995; Werner, 1989, 1993; Werner & Smith, 1982, 1992). Therefore, it is important to understand how resilient adolescents perceive the different resources outside the family as part of their academic success. In the present study, it was found that resilient adolescents mentioned five different outside factors as being important for one's academic achievement.

Academic environmental factors.

Academic environmental factors, in the present study, were operationally defined as the atmosphere or ethos surrounding the school that provides resilient adolescents with the awareness of what it means to be in high school, allowing adolescents to feel supported and motivated to continue their academic endeavors. The importance of the school environment has been addressed by many researchers who have studied children and adolescents who are at-risk for academic failure but who have been able to succeed. Knowing how the school system changes from junior high to high school is important. Arellano & Padilla (1996) state that the general school climate is important for academic outcomes. Wang and Haertel (1995) define school climate as a combination of classroom practices and school policies. For instance, being recognized for one's academic achievement at the school can play an important role in adolescents' motivation for academic excellence.

In the present study, academic environmental factors that were beneficial in doing well academically included the importance of maintaining a good G.P.A. and how this resulted in being recognized in school by different committees: "Freshman year is one of the most important years in

high school. If your G.P.A. stays high you will receive a lot of awards and many committees will recognize your effort in school."

Previous studies have also found (Newman, Lohman, et al., 2000; Newman, Myers, et al., 2000) that resilient adolescents felt high school was more difficult than junior high. While giving advice to their younger peers, resilient adolescents felt it was important to know the difference between junior high and high school. They felt that high school was difficult compared to junior high because the school's ethos differed from junior high school and the expectations were different. Therefore it was important to put more effort in one's academics: "I would tell them that high school is a lot different from jr. high. There are more students and you move at a faster pace. The teachers don't play when it comes to grading; you get what you deserve."

For the resilient adolescents, it was important to keep one's focus in academics through this transition. As experts, they knew that high school gives one a lot of pressure and that adolescents try to fit in. However, resilient adolescents advised their younger counterparts that if they wanted to "fit in" they had to work harder in school in order to continue being academically successful:

> I would tell a young scholar that junior high and high school are two different things. There are a lot of cliques in high school that will try to disrupt you from what you do, but just keep your main focus on your grades and you will succeed.
>
> From my experiences, the only advice that I can relay is to try to keep focused. Usually when you enter a new school, you spend more time trying to fit in more than getting a good grade. If you must fit in, do extra work at home, to make up for the time lost in school.

Other Support Factors.

Research on resilience has stressed the importance of other support factors other than the family system (Garmezy, 1991, as cited in Luthar & Zigler, 1991; and Rutter, 1987; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Wang & Haertel, 1995; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg,

1998, Werner, 1993; Werner & Smith, 1982, 1992). In the present study, other support factors is defined as people or structures besides the family members, such as teachers, preachers, and community programs (such as the Young Scholar Program) that give one support for academics, emotions, behaviors and other areas of one's development.

Wang & Haertel (1998) argue that oftentimes there is a lack of communication between communities in an urban area and social organizations for children and youth. Rutter (1995) mentions that one of the protective mechanisms in resilient children and adolescents is the "opening up of positive opportunities" (p. 84). Outreach programs that are targeted to at-risk populations are one way to open up opportunities for young adolescents who are at risk of school failure. Arellano and Padilla (1996) as well as Hubbard (1999) found that outreach programs such as Upward Bound and AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination) were organizations that promoted the well-being and academic advancement of adolescents' at risk. These adolescents saw in these programs help to continue their studies because these programs provided them with the tools needed to go college as well as the support from peers with aspirations and expectations.

Resilient adolescents in this study also viewed the Young Scholar Program (YSP) as an aid to succeed academically. Some of these students felt special because they were 'scholars' and that gave them a different way to see themselves: "Being involved in the Young Scholar Program is a great honor, don't take it for granted... take full advantage of all the opportunities that come your way because sometimes they only come once." "You know you have something going on for yourself. When you have an advantage like this (Young Scholar Program) you try your best to stay on top of everything."

Belonging to this program was seen as an important factor in achieving academically. As mentioned earlier, the YSP offers a full scholarship to attend a major Ohio university if students maintain a 3.0 or higher G.P.A. This scholarship was important as seen in the words of these

adolescents: "My advice would be to let them know that it ain't [sic] no joke trying to get money for college and this YSP is a once in a lifetime situation, so they should take advantage of it." "Stay focused because once you receive the scholarship, it's all worth while"; "Don't mess up, this scholarship is too important to go right by. In other words, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity"; "Participate in all Y.S.P. activities because they are doing you a favor of free schooling at ... for four years".

Children and adolescents at-risk for school failure need to feel that their surrounding environments are responsive to their needs. Gordon (in press) found that resilient adolescents had higher environmental support beliefs than their non-resilient counterparts. Having a responsive environment gives students the confidence to search for help when needed. In addition, beliefs about having a responsive environment can have an effect on one's beliefs about one's own abilities (Gordon, 1995). The resilient adolescents in this sample felt positive about their environment and encouraged their younger counterparts to take advantage of the services they had and search for help, tutoring and any kind of support when needed: "Go to tutoring and seek help when needed"; "Don't be afraid to ask for help on your studies"; "If they have any problems, they should contact their PC and ask about tutoring sessions"; "If you don't understand something ask questions. It's intelligent to get extra help after school or in the morning."

Teachers have also been found to be critical for students' motivational patterns. Having at least one supportive teacher, or counselor, in school has been found to have a positive impact in the lives of resilient adolescents (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Cauce, Felner , & Primavera, 1982; Hubbard, 1999; O'Connor, 1997). In the present study, some students felt that their teachers and counselors were there for them if they needed them and recommended to the younger scholars to seek help as well in order to continue with their good academic standing: "Try to get in good with your teachers

because they can help you if you need it"; "Your teachers will help you if you are willing to help your self". In addition, the YSP staff was seen as a source of support and assistance in difficult times as well:

> If any R.C. happens to bother you or mess with you for no reason, they don't have the right to abuse you. Go to tell your P.C. or someone who is nice to you. You are a scholar and you are a very special person. Your safety and your feelings are very important.

Positive and Negative Social Behaviors.

Resilient adolescents understand the importance of social related behaviors that in one way or another assist or hinder their academic competence. For many years, aspects of the social domain have been found to foster, and in many instances hinder, resilience in populations at-risk (Cauce, Felner, & Primavera, 1982; Gordon, 1996, in press; Gregory, 1995; Hubbard, 1999; Masten, et al., 1995; Newman, Lohman, et al., 2000; Newman, Myers, et al., 2000; O'Connor, 1997; Rutter, 1995; Smokowski, Reynolds, & Bezruczko, 1999; Werner, 1989, 1993; Werner & Smith, 1982, 1992). In the present study, there were both salient positive and negative social behaviors that resilient adolescents recommended their younger peers to follow or not to follow in order to stay academically successful.

Positive Social Behaviors.

In their review of resilience literature, Luthar and Zigler (1991) found that resilient youngsters appear to identify and seek support from resilient models. They utilize sources of informal networks such as family, friends and members of organizations for support. Adolescents in this study also knew that there were certain social behaviors that could benefit them academically: "Stay involved in school activities and get to know your counselors." Many resilient students saw "having fun" as part of their social support network. According to some of these students, school is first, but having fun is also important during your high school years. Knowing how to balance is the key: "Balance everything so you can have fun, also because if it's all study and no play you won't be academically successful." These adolescents were mature enough to see that your social life is there after high

school, and that one should be aware of that to know where the priorities are: "Surprisingly enough, once you get older, those same 'things' will follow you and there will always be a next time."

Studies on the effects of friendships during early adolescence have been reviewed by Bernth (1982). Research on children and adolescents has found that friends play an important role in resilience. Werner (1992) found that resilient adolescents had at least one, and sometimes, more than one close friend. However, the impact that friends have on the academic achievement of resilient adolescents hasn't been studied individually. For the present sample of resilient adolescents, having friends who supported their academic progress was important: "I would tell the scholar to associate oneself with positive people and to get involved in school related activities" ; "Hang out with 'good loyal, helping, [and] caring' friends". Being popular was seen as a positive aspect if one knew that staying focused in school was the number one priority: "If you can keep your focus on your work and also be popular, then go for it because it's good to know everyone."

Negative Social Behaviors.

Several researchers have found that resilient adolescents have ambivalent feelings and beliefs about friends and romantic relationships for their academic success (Gregory, 1995; Hubbard, 1999; Newman, Lohman, et al., 2000; Newman, Myers, et al., 2000; Reyes & Jason, 1993; Smokowski, Reynolds, Bezruczko, 1999). In their study of at-risk populations and academic performance, Cauce, Felner and Primavera, (1982) found that higher levels of informal support (i.e., friends) among high school students was negatively related to their academic adjustment. They conclude that adolescents who have strong informal support systems in school are subjected to higher levels of peer pressure which may lead to conformity and poor attitudes about their academics.

Some adolescents may have to utilize what Chess (as cited in Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994) refers to as "adaptive distancing" which refers to individuals psychological process to disengage from distressed family members or friends in order to give oneself an opportunity to accomplish and

develop positively both psychologically and socially. In the case of resilient adolescents, they may see negative social behaviors as an impediment rather than a source of success. Gregory (1995) found that adolescents who experienced a positive change in their academics had to disengage from friends who were not a good source of support. These adolescents, Gregory, argues, had to make the decision of putting some people aside in their lives while learning to rely more on themselves. Hubbard, (1999) also found in a sample of at-risk high achievers that for the females, being romantically involved was seen as a barrier to their academic goals, and that females took care of each other regarding "love issues" because for them making sure not to fall in love was a priority for their academic success. Newman, Lohman, et al. (2000) as well as Newman, Myers, et al., (2000) found that high achievers were more likely to mention negative aspects about friends' influences for their academic success.

In the present study, negative social behaviors were more salient than positive social behaviors in staying academically successful. Even though for some students, friends were a source of support, for the majority of resilient students friends or aspects in that social domain were seen as negative behaviors one should avoid in order to maintain one's academic achievement. This negative impact of peers is more succinctly put by one resilient adolescent:

> The advice I would give to a scholar would be, not to let your peers influence you. No matter what you say or what you do your friends will influence you. Not that they would do it deliberately, but if they go astray you may go right along with them. Don't go to high school and think it's all fun and games. Don't let the new faces (such as other females or males) take your mind off of your work... don't let other people keep you from accomplishing your goals.

In addition, being romantically involved was seen as a negative factor in one's academic success. Both males and females expressed negative feelings about their involvement with the opposite sex:

most importantly, I'd tell the young sisters not to look to love, just look to learn cause [~~sic~~] boys will tell them anything to see what kind of panties they are wearing. I [would] tell them how it may sound like a joke, but it's real. They shouldn't have serious relationships.

Males were also aware of the negative impact females can have in one's academic success: "Don't fall for them girls. They will try to seduce you . And your boys too. Realize how your decision is going to affect you in the long run, not at the moment."

Spirituality.

In their review of literature on resilience, Masten, Best, and Garmezy (1990) mentioned that even though the role of church hasn't been systematically studied as well as other protective factors, the role of church has been found to function as a protective mechanism in at-risk situations. According to Masten (1994) and Masten and Coastworth (1998) longitudinal studies with a combination of cross-sectional studies have found several factors, including but not limited to, faith and religion, that appear to be of great importance in resilient children and adolescents. In their longitudinal study of the Kauai people Werner (1989) and Werner & Smith (1992) reported that a 'potent' protective factor among the resilient adults, who were followed since birth, was a feeling of religious faith. Most recently, in their analysis of parents of high achievers and low achievers in at-risk African American families, Gutman and McLoyd (2000), reported that parents of high achievers were more likely to encourage religious involvement to their children than parents of low achievers. Faith helped high achievers to overcome all the barriers they face in order to achieve their goals.

Faith was also seen as a protective factor for the resilient adolescents in this study. According to some of these students, in order to maintain one's academic achievement during the transition to high school, having faith and praying to God were key factors: "And keep their faith, then their academic career should be successful"; "Hold your faith toward God". Resilient students believed that being part of the YSP was in part due to God's power: "I would let them know that they must also

keep the faith and keep their trust in God because if it wasn't for God they wouldn't be in this -- - program which gives them a chance to go to college."

Discussion

The present study expands on the literature of educational resilience by considering the protective factors that resilient adolescents implicitly know are necessary to stay academically successful during the transition to high school. Adolescents in this study were considered resilient based on the guidelines and requirements placed by the Young Scholar Program. These adolescents experienced personal and social hardships while maintaining a 3.0 or higher G.P.A., showing a promising academic future buffered by 1) personal characteristics; 2) family related factors; 3) and external support systems outside the family (Garmezy, 1991). Not until recently has research on educational resilience taken a qualitative approach to understand the different factors and mechanisms utilized by adolescents at-risk that protect them from academic failure. As mentioned earlier, by utilizing qualitative analysis, these findings not only support, but also strengthen the Resilience Theory. By starting our analysis without a preconceived theory in mind, we allowed the data to lead us to our conceptual framework. Previous research studies have analyzed the Resilience Phenomenon by utilizing scales, or asking questions specifically examining the different factors that research on resilience has found to play a role in the Resilience Phenomenon. However, the present findings discovered the same protective factors without utilizing resilience literature background for the creation of the question asked to the adolescents in this sample. The protective factors in the present study emerged from one single question and led to the discovering of themes that have been salient in the resilience literature for the last three decades. By using a qualitative approach, this investigation uncovered nine different protective factors, falling within the three broad categories of the resilience literature mentioned above, that resilient adolescents considered important for one's academic success.

Resilient adolescents utilized several individual related factors for their academic success. Individual aspirations, including but not limited to motivation, perseverance, and positivism were salient themes among these resilient adolescents. Having individual aspirations provided these adolescents with a motor to continue going and to strive for academic excellence. It appears that individual aspirations are an essential factor that acts as a buffer against negative experiences. This is an important area for further study since it is critical to know to what extent having individual aspirations play a role in people's resilience behaviors. Knowing how individual aspirations impact one's whole being can enlighten our understanding of the whole Resilience Phenomenon and it can give us better ways to promote resilience in children. If individual aspirations are essential for at-risk populations to function successfully, are these individual aspirations inherently in nature or can they be fostered during childhood?

In the longitudinal study of the people of Kauai, during their elementary years, resilient children were found to use their personal skills efficiently (Werner, 1993 p. 132) The resilient adolescents in the present sample appear to utilize many personal traits, characteristics and skills they possess as sources of support for their academic achievement. Hard work, self-discipline, and time management were among the different personal factors that these adolescents felt were important in order to stay academically successful. This is important, but most important is to find ways to make young people realize that during adolescence not everything is play. In our society, with the increase in dropouts rates, both researchers and practitioners need to find ways to foster these positive personal factors in adolescents who may think adolescence is not a time of responsibility. How can parents, teachers, and society as a whole promote these positive factors in children and adolescents? Can these factors be fostered? How can they maintain these positive factors in those children who already have a sense of responsibility? Are we, as a society, doing something together to make young people see that

in order to be successful one needs to work hard and utilize all personal skills efficiently? All these questions remain unanswered.

In the present study, resilient adolescents also felt that being oneself was critical in one's academic achievement. This is a meaningful aspect since a lot of teenagers want to fit in and be part of the crowd, and in that struggle, they sometimes start pretending to be someone they are not in order to be liked by others. Both individual aspirations and personal factors are important for resilient adolescents. It seems that one way in which these positive feelings of being oneself can be fostered or maintained in young people is by letting other peers, who have been able to succeed, tell these young adolescents that it is normal to go through hard times, but that one possesses personal characteristics that can buffer these negative experiences. Further research needs to address the impact that peer counseling has on adolescents who are at-risk for negative outcomes.

In addition, resilient adolescents in this sample felt that doing one's homework, studying hard, attending class, staying focused on academics, and being involved in different school activities were among the academic behaviors needed to succeed in school. As mentioned earlier, Gordon (1995) states that extracurricular activities are important for postsecondary education. The importance of extracurricular activities lies in the acceptance process in postsecondary institutions. As Gordon (1995) states, institutions of higher learning consider the participation in extracurricular activities "when making entrance decisions" (p.242). This is an important fact. Even though these behaviors are expected from all students in this society, many times minority ethnic groups do not share the same expectations; not because school is not important but due to their background in another culture. For example, in some Latin American countries, extracurricular activities are not required for getting accepted in the university system. Therefore, parents may not understand that getting involved after school, belonging to clubs or just getting involved in community work are important in the overall evaluation of one's academic success. Being aware of people's experiences in other cultures is

important if researchers, as well as helping professionals, want to understand, and provide solutions for the academic underachievement of populations at-risk.

For many years, personal factors have been found to be important in one's ability to adapt competently in the midst of adversity. From the present findings, it appears that these adolescents possess both inherent characteristics such as good reasoning skills, as well as characteristics that have been fostered by previous learning either by the family nucleus or by people outside the family. In many cases, it appears that previous experiences were a lesson in their lives. It appears, however, that one's maximum capabilities can be achieved if one possesses both, inherent characteristics and good environmental factors that foster one's abilities to one's maximum. However, it is still a convoluted matter how all these aspects, both inherent and those fostered by previous learning, play a role in the resilience process. More prospective longitudinal studies are needed.

Research on the resilience phenomenon has long ago found that family related factors are very important in one's ability to adapt competently in the midst of adversity (Garmezy, 1991, Luthar & Zigler, 1991; Rutter, 1987; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Werner, 1993; Werner & Smith, 1982, 1992). Clark (1991) states that "family is the most important source of support for students" (p.14). If students maintain healthy relationships with family members, especially their parents, family can alleviate the different pressures experienced in high school by providing adolescents with support and understanding through those difficult times. Adolescents need to feel that they have someone in their family to whom they can talk and confide when trouble arises. In the present study, there were only two adolescents who mentioned family factors as part of the protective factors in one's academic achievement. Even though family-related factors weren't present in more resilient adolescents' responses, the importance of family in the life of resilient children and adolescents have been supported by many researchers since research on resilience started about three decades ago. Having the support, nurturance, and understanding of at least one family member is

critical for one's healthy development and when one encounters many negative challenges in one's life, then, family is not only critical, it becomes fundamental for one's overall well-being. The lack of familial support factors in the present study may be due to the type of question asked to the resilient adolescents. Caution is given when interpreting these findings. Even though family is essential in one's life, these adolescents probably mentioned more direct factors related to one's academic achievement when one is going from junior high to high school.

The present study found five different support factors outside the family that adolescents considered important in one's academic success: 1) Academic Environmental Factors; 2) Other Support Factors; 3) Positive Social Behaviors; 4) Negative Social Behaviors; and 5) Spirituality. Previous research on resilience has also found that these protective factors are important for succeeding in different areas of one's life.

In the present study, knowing the difference between the academic atmosphere in junior high and high school, in addition to being recognized by different committees for one's academic endeavors were seen as important aspects in one's academic achievements. Resilient adolescents also felt that high school was more difficult than junior high in many aspects and therefore one needs to put in more effort academically. Adolescents were aware of the pressures one can get in high school and warned younger adolescents that maintaining the focus in one's academics was essential. It seems that resilient adolescents are aware of all the difficulties one may encounter in high school, but they have personal characteristics as well as other support factors that allow them to continue doing well in school. Oftentimes, caring professionals as well as parents feel that adolescents do not listen to their advice; however, allowing other adolescents who have gone through the same system and who have been able to succeed, probably is the key that can get younger adolescents to be aware of the barriers they may encounter. Having resilient adolescents advise younger ones may be an important protective factor.

Younger adolescents can identify with and feel supported by resilient adolescents who share the same background, same struggles, and same aspirations.

For more than two decades, research on resilience has found that other support systems outside the family work as protective factors (Garmezy, 1991, as cited in Luthar & Zigler, 1991; and Rutter, 1987; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Wang & Haertel, 1995; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1998, Werner, 1993; Werner & Smith, 1982, 1992). The present investigation also found that there were other people outside the family, as well as community programs (YSP) that functioned as buffers from academic failure. The present study supports other research studies (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Hubbard, 1999) that have found that outreach programs working for at-risk students in promoting higher education are an important protective factor that motivates students to see a future beyond high school. Resilient adolescents felt motivated by being part of the Young Scholar Program. It made them feel special, closer to reaching their goals since this program offered them a full scholarship to a major university if they maintained a 3.0 or higher G.P.A. Policy makers in every state need to emphasize the need for programs that do outreaching in at-risk and minority populations. At-risk groups need an extra push in order to feel motivated and positive about their future and belonging to a special program that promotes higher education can help them feel that their dreams are not far from becoming true if they work hard in school.

Most of these resilient adolescents felt positive about their surrounding environments. Other studies have found that feelings of having a responsive environment is crucial in fostering the academic achievement of groups at-risk (Gordon Rouse, in press). Gordon (1995) argues that beliefs about environmental supportiveness can have an effect on one's own self-esteem and beliefs about one's own abilities. Believing in having a supportive environment can help a good student enhance his or her own abilities; on the other hand, believing in the lack of a supportive environment can cause detrimental effects on one's ability beliefs (Gordon, 1995). Adolescents recommended their younger

peers to go to tutoring, and seek help from teachers when needed. This finding is significant because it reminds us of the importance of environmental support factors in adolescents' lives. As Gordon (1995) states, believing that one has a supportive environment can enhance one's own abilities. Both, tutoring and teachers' support are important in any students' lives, but in at-risk groups, it is crucial that adolescents feel that they can seek help and find it when needed. Program developers as well as school personnel need to be aware of students' needs in at-risk populations in order to better assist them in their academics endeavors. The implementation of more tutoring programs after school, not only in high school, but starting in the elementary years, can act as a protective factor in the lives of many children and adolescents at-risk. For many years, tutoring has been seen as one of the last resources to prevent failure of children and adolescents who have a difficult time understanding class material. It is imperative that tutoring can be seen in more positive ways, not as a program being provided for the "not-so smart" children, but as a program that can help enhance one's academic understanding and competence. If children start attending tutoring programs in the elementary years, the negative connotation that tutoring programs have can be replaced by more positive ones because children can be instilled with a more positive outlook of what it means to go to tutoring. School systems as well as school personnel need to emphasize the positive role that tutoring programs have on children and adolescents.

Social related factors have also been found to be important in the ability of students at-risk to face adversity competently. In the present study, resilient adolescents mentioned both positive and negative social behaviors that one should do or in many cases should avoid in order to continue being academically successful. Many researchers have found ambivalent feelings about friends and peers among academically successful adolescents (Gregory, 1995; Hubbard, 1999; Newman, Lohman, et al., 2000; Newman, Myers, et al., 2000; Reyes & Jason, 1993; Smokowoski, Reynolds, & Bezruczko, 1999). In the present study, it was also found that adolescents felt positively and negatively about

certain social behaviors in the school setting. Knowing how to choose the right type of friends that could support one's academic endeavors was important among the resilient adolescents in this sample. Resilient adolescents also felt that having fun was necessary in order to do well in school as long as one kept one's main focus on school.

Masten, et al. (1995) found that the correlation between social and academic competence drastically dropped from childhood to adolescence. In addition, researchers have also found that higher levels of informal support was related to academic adjustment difficulty (Cauce, Felner, & Primaveral, 1982). In the present study, it was found that adolescents paid more attention to the quality rather than the quantity of friends one should have. Peer pressure was mentioned several times by many resilient adolescents as a barrier to academic competence. Both females and males, in this sample, felt negatively about being romantically involved. They warned their younger counterparts to be aware that falling in love could hurt their academic achievements.

In his review of literature on social identity, peer relationships and academic competence, Clark (1991) mentions how high-achievers tend to have friends with the same kind of academic records and same educational values. Luthar (1991) found that social skills were related to resilience. On the other hand, Gordon (1995) found only a minimal difference on social motivational patterns between resilient and non-resilient students, and these differences were not associated with resilience. Gordon (in press) differentiates between protective factors and compensatory factors in that protective factors assist adolescents under stress, while compensatory factors are related directly to academic achievement, regardless of stressful situations. In other words, protective factors interact with stress to provide a buffer against academic failure, while compensatory factors have a direct effect on academic competence and achievement. Gordon (in press) found that social-ability and social control were compensatory factors. In other words, social skills appear to add to one's academic achievement

regardless of stressful situations, therefore, they add to the overall academic competence, but they are not just important for those students trying to overcome obstacles (Gordon, 1995).

Social school behaviors in the present study may function in the same manner in that they may be compensatory factors for one's academic competence, but they are not directly related to the resilience phenomenon. It may be that having a 'few' good friends is all that resilient adolescents need in order to succeed academically. Perhaps, these adolescents are more mature due to the many struggles they have to face. They understand that there are positive and negative aspects of one's social life, and they try to balance both in order to maintain their academic achievement. Perhaps, they understand that there are priorities, and social-related goals are not one of them. Another explanation is that these adolescents may suffer from social isolation. Since these resilient adolescents are striving for academic competence, and they come from a minority, at-risk group, they may not be able to find other young students with the same academic aspirations and expectations among their ethnic minority peers. If this is so, further studies need to address the "internal symptoms" of social isolation such as depression and anxiety. Luthar (1991) found that resilient adolescents had higher scores on depression and anxiety than their non-resilient counterparts. Practitioners and school personnel need to be warned that resilient adolescents may suffer from internal symptoms, and therefore, they may need to be treated and given the attention necessary to prevent negative outcomes. It is also important to provide resilient adolescents with social activities where they can have the opportunity to explore and experience positive social relationships. If they lack the support in their own school, it may be possible for programs such as the YSP to create activities that enhance positive social experiences that bring students together who have the same background, same struggles, and same educational goals.

The last protective factor resilient adolescents mentioned, in this study, was having faith or spirituality. Spirituality worked as a protective factor because it gave these adolescents hope for their future. They believed God was an important part of their success and that motivated them even more

to continue their academic success. Faith, or spirituality, has been mentioned in previous research studies (Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Wener, 1989; Werner & Smith, 1982, 1992), as being associated with competence and psychological adjustment, however, it still needs to be addressed as an important area of study in the resilience literature. Further research needs to be done in this area to understand up to what extent having faith and being involved in religious activities fosters resilience in children and adolescents at-risk.

Masten and Coastworth, (1998) remind us that adolescents are more susceptible than younger children to the experience of losing friends or family members, or to experience loss of faith in the schools, the communities, and government. As seen in this study, adolescents utilize their own personal characteristics, family support and outside sources of support to assist them in their academic endeavors. If the goal is to change the competence of children at-risk for school failure, multiple aspects of intervention need to be considered in order to promote academic competence. Masten and Coatsworth (1998) recommend that ways to promote competence can include "efforts to change child capabilities" (p. 206), and interventions that have an effect on the different contexts in which the child lives, such as parenting education or providing more educational opportunities through the creation of outreach programs for at-risk student populations.

In addition, it is important to provide adolescents with role models with whom adolescents can identify and who emphasize that success is possible if one utilizes personal characteristics as well as any other resources made available to them. Having older resilient adolescents provide assistance to younger ones in ways to achieve one's goals is important. It is not the same to receive advice from someone who is 10 or 15 years older or someone who doesn't share one's background. How can adolescents believe practitioners are trying to help them, if in many cases, they have nothing in common with these adolescents who have struggled their whole life for a better future. Adolescents will feel more comfortable and believe that it is possible if the advice comes from someone just like

them, with the same background, same experiences and same struggles. Masten and Coastworth (1998) in their review of literature on competence in favorable and unfavorable environments conclude that "there is no such thing as an invulnerable child." They conclude that it's not enough to increase one's knowledge about risk or protective factors for at-risk communities. It is crucial to increase and provide better resources for these children at-risk in order to give them the opportunity to thrive, to adapt competently. Children and adolescents need to feel they have a supportive and responsive environment in order to feel secure and positive about their future.

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